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COMMITTEE ON
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1305

December 10, 2003

Dr. Julie Gerberding
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road NE
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Dr. Gerberding:

I am writing to commend you on the decision of the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to explore purchasing influenza vaccine from Europe to meet the current vaccine shortage in the United States. As the United States faces an early and already deadly flu season, I thank you and your colleagues at the CDC for doing everything possible to preserve the health of Americans.

I appreciate the CDC's acknowledgement that pharmaceuticals produced and purchased in other industrialized nations, in this case, the United Kingdom, have equivalent safety standards as those in the U.S., and thus are appropriate for consumption by U.S. citizens. Just as the federal government purchased anthrax vaccine from Canada when facing a significant shortage in 2001, here again the government recognizes that the international market is an important resource for safe and affordable pharmaceuticals.

Millions of Americans have discovered in purchasing lower-priced pharmaceuticals from Canada that safety is not a concern when accessing drugs from other industrialized nations. It is unfortunate that American citizens do not have the same legal right as the federal government to take advantage of the world marketplace for affordable prescription drugs, and I hope that the CDC's actions will help clarify that pharmaceuticals produced and purchased in Canada and Europe are safe.

Again, I applaud CDC for its efforts to secure safe and affordable pharmaceuticals for American families by tapping into the international market. Please let me know if my colleagues and I can be helpful to the CDC as you finalize this arrangement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rahm Emanuel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R".

Rahm Emanuel
Member of Congress